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Public comments invited for '97 Building Code

Nearly 650 proposed amendments to the Ontario Building Code that will cut red tape and increase consumer choice were released for consultation on Friday by Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister, Al Leach.

"The government's ongoing review of the Ontario Building Code has a 'back to basics' focus of

health, safety and accessibility for persons with disabilities," said Leach.

"The proposals are also intended to cut red tape, create more opportunities for consumer choice and allow builders to take advantage of product innovations for new construction."

The 1997 edition of the Building Code will be

based on new principles established during the first phase of consultation. *Back to Basics: A Consultation Paper on the Focus of the Ontario Building Code* was distributed for comment earlier this year.

Proposals for consultation include:

- giving consumers the opportunity to decide for

themselves what level of energy efficiency is right for their home and budget and replacing with mandatory labelling systems (similar to the EnerGuide labels on appliances) various energy conservation provisions introduced in the Code since 1985;

- improved access for people with disabilities, including an increase in the number of entrances required to be constructed as barrier-free and the widening of doors and ramps;

- making many Code requirements more flexible, for example, it will be easier to create live/work spaces and "main street" buildings (e.g., mixed-use apartment buildings above stores);

- automatic sprinklers in new care homes responding to a jury recommendation from the inquest into the Meadowcroft retirement home fire;

- improved safety for

large non-residential buildings with expanded requirements for the installation of sprinklers in these buildings.

"We're committed to consumer protection, not to red tape," Leach said. "We've already streamlined and improved the planning process, we're correcting a badly outdated and unfair property tax system, and we're fixing the rent control systems to make it work better."

"Now we are looking to create a more cost-effective Code that imposes less of a regulatory burden on development. These measures will help encourage growth and more jobs in the province."

Interested citizens have until Dec. 20, 1996 to submit comments on the proposals. The new 1997 Code is expected to be released in the fall of 1997, to take effect March 1, 1998. The Code is revised every few years.

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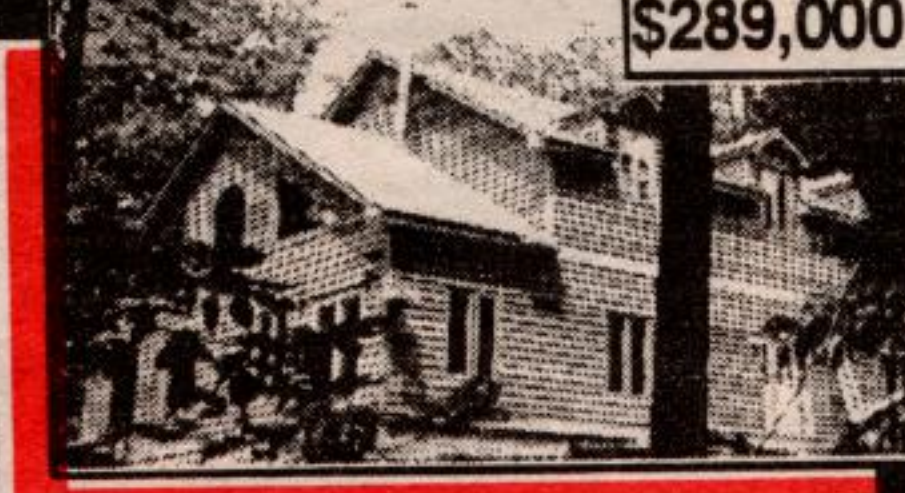
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